European Commission

Elections and Democratic Participation

Understanding turbulent political times through innovative EU research

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The 2019 European elections will possibly be viewed by future historians as a landmark election for the EU due to the extraordinary political context in which they're taking place and the challenges to democracy this involves. This is why innovative social sciences research is vital to help us understand the shifting patterns of democratic participation in the twenty-first century.

In such a turbulent political environment, it is essential that innovative social sciences research can provide facts-based neutral analysis, innovative solutions to improve democratic systems for the better, and assist in the formulation of evidence-based policy. The EU's Horizon 2020 programme, including through the European Research Council (ERC) and Marie Curie fellowships, is thus fully supportive of nurturing Europe's most gifted social scientists.

This flyer summarises 11 EU-funded projects that are featured in our dedicated Results Pack on Elections and Democratic Participation. To access the full Pack please go to: cordis.europa.eu/article/id/401447

Research and Innovation

BOTFIND

(Finding Bots, Detecting Harassing Automation, and Restoring Trust in Social Media Civic Engagement), hosted in the United Kingdom

This ERC-funded project has contributed to the development of the Oxford Internet Institute's 'junk news aggregator' (JNA) that interactively displays articles from unreliable sources as they spread on Facebook. In a period dominated by 'fake news', researchers hope that the tool will help to tackle the growing phenomenon of misinformation on social media. The tool is open and available to all.

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CATCH-EyoU

(Constructing AcTive Citizenship with European Youth: Policies, Practices, Challenges and Solutions), coordinated in Italy

This project has investigated young people's view of the EU and their role in building the EU through their participatory practices at EU, national, regional and local levels. The project took a multidisciplinary approach and involved representative samples of over 10 000 young people from eight different countries, allowing for an in-depth exploration of young people's feelings, experiences, views and representations of participation.
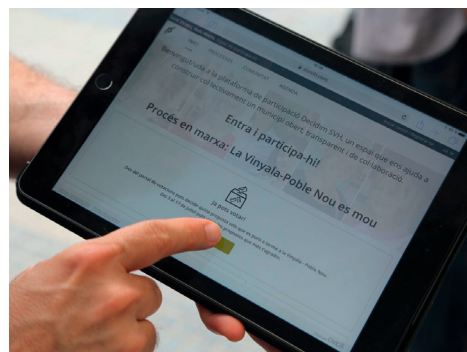
→ catcheyou.eu

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civiciti

(The Citizen Participation Platform), coordinated in Spain

Innovative Spanish SME Civiciti has pioneered an e-voting technology that is bringing participatory democracy to over 100 public authorities in Spain with plans to also expand into the Latin American market. However, their technology is not designed only for civic elections – the civiciti technology is also suitable for use in the private sector and the education system as a means to better empower people in decision-making processes.

→ civiciti.info/en

© Civiciti

PARTISPACE

(Spaces and Styles of Participation: Formal, non-formal and informal possibilities of young people's participation in European cities), coordinated in Germany

Recent youth-led climate protests across Europe and beyond are a serious reminder that young people are an integral part of our democratic system and they want to have a say in Europe's future. Any such participation starts at the local level and the PARTISPACE project has been investigating its existing forms in eight cities across Europe.

→ partispace.eu

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POLCON

(Political Conflict in Europe in the Shadow of the Great Recession), hosted in Italy

Did the Great Recession of the late 2000s and its aftermath have important consequences for the long-term trends in the development of political conflict in Europe? This was the key question that the ERC-funded POLCON project sought to answer, based on detailed analysis of political competition in the electoral arena, the protest arena and issue-specific public interactions.

⇢ eui.eu/Projects/POLCON

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POLPART

(How citizens try to influence politics and why. International comparisons of movement and party politics), hosted in the Netherlands

The ERC-funded POLPART project has been tracking the trends and movements regarding citizens' political participation in both Europe and Latin America. One of the fundamental questions they wanted to answer was why some individuals are drawn to political participation through the formal political process (such as voting) and why others prefer to engage in protest politics.

⇢ polpart.org

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PROMISE

(PROMoting youth Involvement and Social Engagement: Opportunities and challenges for 'conflicted' young people across Europe), coordinated in the United Kingdom

Young people are instigators of social change, driven in part by the challenging circumstances that prevent their social progress, such as a lack of opportunities, resources and respect. The PROMISE project has spent three years exploring young people's responses to these challenges, particularly focusing on youth who encounter conflict with authorities.
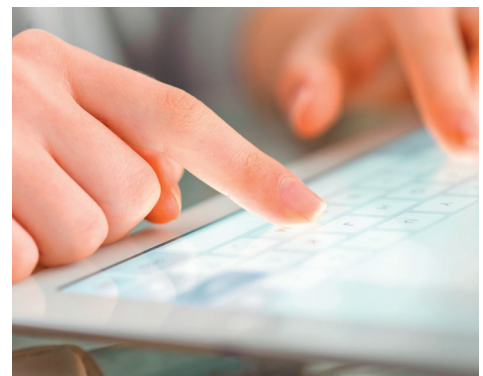
⇢ promise.manchester.ac.uk/en/home-page

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SCALABLE DEMOCRACY

(Can Direct Democracy be Scaled? The Promise of Networked Democracy and the Affordances of Decision-Making Software), coordinated in Italy

Political participation platforms are becoming commonplace within political parties, such as Italy's 5 Star Movement, Germany's Pirates Party and Spain's Podemos. The SCALABLE DEMOCRACY project explored how effective these platforms actually are in enabling direct participatory democracy within political parties and how they impact the relationship between grassroots party members and party elites.
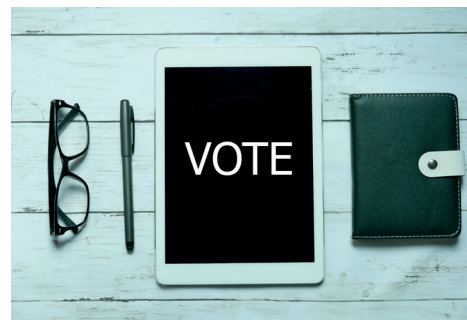
⇢ scalingdemocracy.net

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SEEVS / SEEVCA

(Self-Enforcing E-Voting System: Trustworthy Election in Presence of Corrupt Authorities), hosted in the United Kingdom

Ensuring the security of electronic voting machines and quelling fears about vote-rigging have become ever-more important to ensure the legitimacy of the democratic process. One ERC-funded researcher has been working tirelessly to develop such an e-voting system through two projects, SEEVS and its follow-up SEEVCA.

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STATORG

(State Encroachment on Civil Society? A Comparative Study of Parties, Interest Groups and Welfare-Providing Organizations in Contemporary Democracies), hosted in the United Kingdom

State regulation of civil society has grown consistently over the past decade, raising concerns over the eroding role of the latter in shaping democratic decision-making. The ERC-funded STATORG project has investigated this across several long-lived democracies, considering country-specific regulations and how these have impacted on civil society organisations.

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UNREP

(Who Should Have a Say? Preferences for Unequal Representation), coordinated in the Netherlands

Whilst democratic consultation is increasingly viewed as a way to improve our democracies, the question of how to use it fairly is still a major challenge for stakeholders and policymakers. The UNREP project has provided interesting insights into the concepts of equal and unequal representation by studying the factors shaping citizens' reactions to democratic consultations.

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Learn more about examples of funded projects from the
European Research Council: erc.europa.eu/projects-figures/stories

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